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NORTH EAST FLORIDA EDUCATIONAL CONSORTIUM

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Chairman Ajit Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW,
Washington, DC 20554

October 16, 2017

Dear Chairman Pai,

I am writing today in response to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Public Notice which, among other things, considers changes to the E-Rate program. I want to thank you for working with schools and libraries to gather feedback for the services that we need. The E-Rate program provides critical discounts to assist schools to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access.

The E-Rate program is succeeding in its mission. E-rate is the most successful program that I have been part of in the past 24 years in Education. Any changes to the E-Rate program should be focused on expanding a successful program that has yet to reach its full potential and ensuring the FCC remains a good steward of the changes adopted 2014, allowing those changes to progress and play out as intended.

Northeast Florida Educational Consortia (NEFEC) works with 15 Small and Rural Districts in Florida. Our districts could not function at the level that they do without the E-rate program. Most of our districts are in small rural areas which are greatly underserved due to their population and poverty levels. Many of our students have no internet service at home so the Libraries and Schools are where they go to get connected.

Most of our districts have applied for most of their 5 year C2 budgets and the funding has been a great benefit to our school districts. Our schools are moving toward 1 to 1 initiatives and the demand for connectivity has grown more each year. I would anticipate that most of our districts would spend most of their 5 year budgets by next year. It was a tremendous help to our school districts.

We strongly support and are so grateful for the E-Rate program for being able to access and afford the high-speed connectivity that is so central to our students' learning. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Steve Helms

NEFEC Educational Technology Services

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